

ZANE BOYD

A SELECTION OF EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE, LETTERS & PUBLISHED ARTICLES

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his life, in Toronto, November 24, 2013.*

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Op Ed piece in the Globe & Mail

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Globe & Mail, May 5, 1986

Sanctions, pain and gain

It is true that boycotts and sanctions seldom succeed, because they rarely gain the near-universal support and application necessary for success. But it is precisely because South African apartheid is so universally reviled that sanctions in this case could be effective, if only governments like Canada would stop dilly-dallying.

As for the issue of sanctions harming South African blacks most, the blacks themselves have indicated after decades of suffering that they would endure short-term pain for long-term gain. Those who oppose sanctions, on the other hand, argue in effect for just the opposite - short-term gain for lingering, long-term pain.

Zane Boyd, Toronto

Globe & Mail Dec. 9, 1987

Looking for a voice

In NDP's Defence Policy Politically Unrealistic (Nov. 6), John M. Lamb refers to two main arguments for Canada remaining in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and North American Aerospace Defence Command.

Military strategists, he says, value NATO membership for contributing to deterrence. However, with nuclear overkill at more than 50,000 weapons, Canada's deterrent is irrelevant. Besides, once either side attacks, either by design or by accident, there is no defence.

Mr. Lamb, instead, focuses on the second and more compelling argument: Canadians, he says, believe that NATO is a good way for Canada to influence world events and to moderate East-West military competition. But, as Mr. Lamb himself admits, Ottawa has had little influence affecting NATO and NORAD policy, even when that policy directly involves Canada. His answer? Greater effort in making Canada's voice heard.

Implied, of course, is that Canada in fact has a distinct voice. However, for all its pontificating about peace and its carefully cultivated image as a third force and world peacemaker, in practice Canada behind the scenes has actively and willingly promoted NATO and NORAD aims and policies all along and participated in their horrendous arms development.

Moreover, if Canada were ever actually to advocate independent and genuinely pro-disarmament policies within NATO and NORAD, can anyone seriously doubt what the response (if any) from the United States and other NATO big shots would be?

Critics of the NDP's anti-NATO/NORAD position charge that it spells isolationism and would render Canada irrelevant as a potential force for change in the broader world arena. Curiously, many of these same critics have no difficulty praising Ottawa's independence, courage and moral and political leadership in opposing the United States, Britain and other Western powers on South Africa and in heading up an ad hoc alliance of nations campaigning for tough, comprehensive sanctions against Pretoria.

Ottawa's initiative on South Africa shows how much more authority, influence, and respect Canada can command when it adopts an independent and up-front stand on foreign policy issues.

Why not a similar stand against the war Alliances?

Zane Boyd, Toronto

Globe & Mail July 31, 1987:

Protection for Gays

Re Schreyer Criticizes Bill, Calling Gays Afflicted (July 15): Clearly, it's former governor-general Edward Schreyer who's afflicted here -- with appalling bigotry and ignorance.

Zane Boyd, Toronto

Globe & Mail Aug. 2, 1989

Catty adage

We should hardly be surprised that the world's fastest animals are so slow to procreate (Cheetahs Too Slow For Zoo - July 27). After all, as the old saying goes, "Cheetahs never prosper."

Zane Boyd, Toronto

Globe & Mail

Dec 7 1991

Men

Toronto ONT - It's one thing for a recent issue of *Esquire*, that mouthpiece of macho chic, to have a journalist's story of his trip to a "Wild Man Weekend" serve as *Esquire's* introduction to the so-called men's movement. But The Globe and Mail (New Men -Focus, Nov. 30)?

Ian Brown, reporting on the Shadow Workshop he attended at California's Ridge Trail Institute, passes this off as what the men's movement is all about.

This workshop and a slew of others happening across America have been inspired by poet Robert Bly, author of the bestseller *Iron John*, who Mr. Brown contends "founded" the men's movement with his Wild Man thesis and "mythopoetic" outlook. Never mind that Michael Kesterton's accompanying Globe article "The Whole Man Catalogue" (itself a series of glibly selected quotes from movement spokesmen) kicks off by stating, "The seminal event of the men's movement, say many observers, was the publication in 1974 of *The Liberated Man* by Warren Farrell." That's a good decade before Mr. Bly appeared on the scene.

Anyway, Mr. Bly's Wild Man thesis is a contentious one in the men's movement. I, who consider myself a men's movement participant, have never attended a Wild Man Weekend or the like and don't particularly care to. But I and numerous other men have been involved in various men's groups organizing against violence against women, against sexism, and for challenging patriarchy in society's various institutions – organizations that exist in dozens of North American cities, but which get no mention in The Globe's coverage.

Mr. Bly himself, according to Mr. Kesterton, contends there are in fact seven men's movements: right-wing, anti-feminist feminist men; men's- rights advocates; Marxist, gay; black and mythopoetic. But all we hear about is the mythopoetic and a passing reference by Mr. Brown to the gay men's movement, which itself is contemptuously portrayed as some sort of movement for sex parlors.

The Globe's utterly facile, scornful introduction to the men's movement is doubly insulting, appearing as it did on the eve of a week of activities commemorating the Montreal massacre of 14 women that are aimed at ending all violence against women – activities in which many in the men's movement are involved.

Worst of all, men who regularly read The Globe, many of them at the pinnacle of patriarchal power in our society – in business, government, religion and education – can, after reading this stuff, amusedly and smugly dismiss this obviously ridiculous men's movement as not worthy of further consideration.

Or is that The Globe's intention?

Zane Boyd

Globe and Mail

May 6, 1993.

Toeing the NDP line

As a "red-diaper baby" growing up in the Communist Party, I became aware what happened when somebody didn't toe the party line. Today, fortunately, most people – but Socialists, in particular, who for so long were tarred with the brush of Stalinism – can be glad that the old-line Communist parties are now pretty much dead.

Apparently Stalinist practices are not. The former federal New Democratic Party finance critic, Steven Langdon, has just been fired for daring to publicly criticize the current practices of Ontario NDP Premier Bob Rae (Langdon Slapped Down - April 30). What will befall Mr. Langdon if he chooses to persist? In the former USSR under Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, an unrepentant Mr. Langdon would soon have found himself out sweeping streets or picking cabbages. Short of that, maybe the party can offer Mr. Langdon a job printing little Bob Rae brooches or official Bob Rae portraits.

At least in the old Communist parties (the way the theory went, anyway), you were supposed to have a full democratic debate on party policies at conventions, then everyone was duty-bound to carry out that policy – or else! They called it democratic centralism. In the NDP, you are supposed to have a full democratic debate on policy, then the leadership does whatever the hell it likes and everyone is bound to go along -or else! Call it undemocratic centralism.

Zane Boyd, NDP member, Toronto

Globe & Mail

Aug. 8, 1994

Immigration

I was not at all surprised by the vehemence of the six letters you published on July 23 attacking Andrew Coyne's column on immigration.

However, I was also not at all surprised to find that these responses to Mr. Coyne included a vision of invading hordes of Haitians, Mexicans, Nigerians and Chinese; an attack on Canada's "ridiculously generous" social-services system and an appeal to preserving "the distinctiveness of Canadian society."

Now I am aware that British and European hordes are perhaps a less daunting prospect, that our social-services system is already cluttered with too much riff-raff and that "the distinctiveness of Canadian society" is a nice code word for "white," "English-speaking" (or French, maybe), and "Christian."

It is at times like these that I recall what a native schoolmate said to me during a similar debate over immigration policy several years ago: "Why don't you all go back to where you came from?"

Zane Boyd

Toronto Star

Nov. 16, 2002

Rental housing even more scarce

Toronto's vacancy rate may be at 1 per cent, but who says there's a lack of housing in this city? Nearly every day, there's another condo going up on another city street. Condos, condos everywhere. An advanced case of condorrhea, if ever there was one.

So ubiquitous have these blessed buildings become and so symbolic of our city's new look and ethos, that I hereby propose an entirely new name for our gracious city, along with a brand new slogan: "Condoronto - Where living's a luxury."

Zane Boyd, Toronto

Toronto Star

Dec. 29, 2003

Iraq

Who's ready to bet on Iraq's chances for prosperity and democracy once George W. Bush is finished bombing the hell out of what's left of that country?

Zane Boyd, Haliburton

NOW Magazine,

October 27, 2010

Mayor Ford

There's one glaring fact that contradicts all the commentary now circulating that Toronto has decidedly spoken in favour of newly elected mayor Rob Ford's message and program. Seeing as only 50 per cent of the eligible electorate voted, Ford's 47 per cent of that vote amounts to a mere 23.5 per cent of the city's population — even less if you factor in those who didn't make it onto the voters lists.

Go figure!

Zane Boyd, Toronto

Globe & Mail,
Feb. 2, 2011
Crisis in Egypt

Re Obama's Silence On Mubarak Says Volumes (Jan. 31): Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says the U.S. is on the side, as it has been for more than 30 years, of a democratic Egypt that provides both political and economic rights to its people and that respects human rights. Who does she think she's kidding?

The truth is the very opposite. The U.S. has been the principal backer of Hosni Mubarak's regime – politically, economically and militarily. As such, Washington has been entirely complicit in – and silent about – that regime's ruthless suppression of all dissent and organized opposition

Zane Boyd, Toronto

Toronto Star
Sat. Feb. 5, 2011
Egypt

How heartening to hear our leaders standing up for democracy and for political and human rights in Egypt?

The question is, where have their voices been for the past 30 years? Another troubling question: where are their clarion calls for democracy when it comes to Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, the U.A.E. and Algeria?

The truth is, the leaders of the United States and all the world's major powers — including our own leaders here in Canada — have actively and consistently supported Hosni Mubarak's ruthless regime from its inception, as they have other dictatorships in the Middle East.

Democracy and freedom have in fact been — and continue to be — sacrificial lambs when it comes to the economic and strategic political interests of the so-called G8 nations. We are hearing our leaders' clamor for democracy in Egypt (and only Egypt) today, only because it now politically expedient to do so.

Zane Boyd, Toronto

Opinion column – Toronto *Globe & Mail*

January 29, 1997

Forward to the past

In “Longer Work Week Urged” (Jan.23) you report that a panel of 11 Ontario Tory MPPs has urged the scrapping of 1,500 regulations and 45 statutes. Among the panel's proposals: a 50-hour work week, eliminating overtime restrictions, cutting severance pay requirements, and exempting from pay-equity laws companies with fewer than 50 and preferably under 100 workers.

Unlike so many dusty provincial reports, this one is getting speedy action – 17 bills tabled now, more to follow.

Such legislation will lead to an even smaller percentage of even more overworked skilled staff; an even more underpaid class of job-insecure, disproportionately female workers, and an ever-growing army of even poorer and angrier unemployed pressuring wage rates still further down. This, of course, is its purpose.

MPP Frank Sheehan's assertion that his panel's proposals will result in job creation is predictable and pure pablum for the pious.

The Ontario Federation of Labour's Gord Wilson, on the other hand, is only partly right that “the thread going through all of this is that they are attacking the most vulnerable and lowest-paid workers.” The Harris government, like business-backed regimes the world over, won't stop short of undoing every significant social and environmental policy standing in the way of profitability. And trade union rights and freedoms are ultimately on the agenda. That is the thread.

The paradox is that ours is the richest economy we have ever known – provincially, nationally and globally. There is greater wealth than ever before both in absolute and relative, per-capital terms. And overwhelmingly it is in private hands.

But this is not simply a case of corporate greed, as so many left-leaning critics like to believe. This is how capitalism works. Corporation CEOs are not gluttonous ogres. They have little choice, driven by the need to “improve productivity and maximize efficiencies so as to compete in a global economy,” as the panel's report so ably puts it. To survive, it is not enough to be profitable; you must be as or more profitable than everyone else. Call it insane, if you like. But it is the compelling logic of a system championed as God's gift to man, the final stage in evolutionary wisdom, and humanity's only option.

Commentators as diverse as Jeremy Rifkin and Henry Kissinger have warned of ominous social consequences looming in the current corporate agenda. The 25-year postwar period which saw unfettered economic expansion, a rising standard of living, and progressive social and labour legislation was a historical anomaly, fueled by postwar reconstruction and the Cold War (*a reference to the postwar arms race and encirclement and isolation of Soviet Russia by the US and its NATO allies –ed.*) Such a period won't come again. Today's agenda isn't back to the

future. It's forward to the past – to the 1920s and 1930s – only in an even more globalized and explosive form.

In 10 or 20 years' time – when protests paralyze the streets, when cops and goons are busting heads, when churches are food banks, and when fascists find a new crop of brown-shirts among disaffected youth and the unemployed – let it not be said we weren't fore-warned. Of such stuff are popular revolutions made – or Hitlers born.

History repeats itself – for those are ignorant of its lessons.

Zane Boyd, Toronto